

NAME GAMES

Olympic Boosters Gave Right 'Ring' To Soldier Hollow

Sep '99 BY KARL CATES

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HEBER CITY — In the hypersensitive realm of advertising, there is a fine line dividing truth, taste and what it takes to transform an idea into an icon.

Take Soldier Hollow, site of the 2002 Winter Olympic biathlon and cross-country events. Its name is a complete invention, created two years ago when Games boosters realized they had to call the place something.

"The 'South End of Wasatch Mountain State Park' didn't have much of a ring to it," explained Robyn Pearson, economic-development director for the Heber Valley Chamber of Commerce.

Pleasantly shocked in 1997 that the area an hour east of Salt Lake City was even in the running for an Olympic venue, business leaders huddled hastily to come up with a pitch that would woo the Salt Lake Organizing Committee.

"We needed something with some 'zazz,'" said Pearson. Recommendations that the site be named The Chalet, after a rustic lodge in the area, were dismissed as too murky. Then somebody noticed its proximity to Soldier Springs — christened, according to local lore, for a U.S. Army march through the Heber Valley during the federal government's 1850s campaign to quell a supposed Mormon uprising in Utah.

"Whether that was actually the spring they [the soldiers] used, we don't know," said Bob Mathis, Wasatch County Olympic coordinator.

No problem. Discussion turned swiftly to fond remembrances of the 10th Mountain Division. The crack band of Rocky Mountain sharpshooters — biathletes, of sorts, themselves — skied into risky backcountry assignments in Europe during World War II.

Suddenly, Soldier Hollow the moniker had merit.

"That's how names get created," said State Parks board member Lucille Tuttle of Heber City. "Somebody makes them up."

The rest is history, except for the cautious creation of a marketing scheme for Soldier Hollow that is just beginning to take shape. Directing the effort is SHOOT (Soldier Hollow Olympic Organizing Team), which is tiptoeing between what's catchy and what's politically correct. Debate at one of SHOOT's recent meetings, for example, focused on whether to include a rifle in a logo for Soldier Hollow.

"I'm not so certain I'd put that gun in there . . . there's such an emotional fervor now," said state Sen. Beverly Evans, R-Altamont, whose district includes Wasatch County.

The upshot: The outline of a cross-country skier to be emblazoned on Soldier Hollow T-shirts and memorabilia will be without a rifle, even though the Olympic biathlon involves shooting.

That same night, the Heber Valley Arts Council presented a 1½-page Soldier Hollow "theme" proposal representing "all cultures" in the valley. But the document got edited on a few points.

"That sounds too political," said SHOOT member Dea Riley, who pushed to change "public lands preservation" to "earth preservation." Somebody else noted the writers forgot to mention "international good will," the precept behind the Olympics.

Another passage fretted that parts of area history might be "offensive," including the American Indian Romeo-and-Juliet legend of Mount Timpanogos.

"We're just trying to involve everybody," said SHOOT member Britt Mathwick, who manages Midway's Homestead Resort. He pointed out that the promotional effort has serious long-term implications for Soldier Hollow, whose post-Games status is shaky.

Added Lyle Nelson, a SLOC official directing the venue's cross-country design: "It's all about what happens with Soldier Hollow after the Olympics."

Soldier Hollow targets finances

Venue seeks an endowment for after Olympics

By Lisa Riley Roche 9-7-99
Deseret News staff writer

Soldier Hollow is not expecting to share in the \$40 million legacy fund that the Salt Lake Organizing Committee is committed to leaving behind after the 2002 Winter Games, state parks officials told lawmakers Tuesday.

But the state Division of Parks and Recreation does want money. Options outlined to the Legislature's Sports Advisory Committee were a separate endowment or appropriation from the state.

That would enable additional development at the cross-country and biathlon venue located in Wasatch Mountain State Park near Midway, such as camping areas, equestrian and hiking trails, a



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tubing hill and a golf course.

No action was taken by the committee Tuesday, although some concerns were raised about the state coming up with new money to

run the facility after the Olympics.

The \$40 million legacy fund created by lawmakers is intended for the bobsled and luge track, ski jumps at the Utah Winter Sports Park near Park City and the speed-skating oval at the Oquirrh Park Fitness Center in Kearns.

Those facilities were also built by the state but have since been sold to SLOC. After the Olympics, they will be turned over to a private entity created by the Legislature, the Utah Athletic Foun-

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dation.

State parks officials told the committee they did not want to give up ownership of Soldier Hollow just to get access to the legacy fund. That money, they said, won't be enough for the facilities that already have access to it.

Rep. Jordan Tanner, R-Provo, the co-chairman of the committee, said the presentation stirred up serious concerns. Tanner said if something is done for Soldier Hollow, other venues will expect similar treatment.

"I think we really need to proceed with caution," Tanner said.

Also raised was the effect funding the facility might have on parks or planned parks in other areas of the state, especially those located off the Wasatch Front.

Olympic competitions will be held along the Wasatch Front in Provo, Ogden, Salt Lake City and Park City as well as the park, including privately owned ski resorts and government-operated ice rinks.

There was no dollar amount attached to the proposals made Tuesday, although the estimated cost of operating the cross-country and biathlon track is at least \$250,000 annually.

Besides a legislative appropriation, parks officials offered two

other options. One was simply closing the sports facilities to save the future costs of maintaining them.

The other, setting up a contract with a private company to run the track, was deemed a financial risk because of the cost of maintaining an Olympic-level competition facility.

Also Tuesday, the committee heard from local government officials who are still trying to calculate the actual cost of hosting events during the 2002 Winter Games.

Communities along the Wasatch Front are hoping to get funds from the state to offset those costs but didn't get a very good reception when they appeared before the committee earlier this summer.

Tuesday, the local government leaders said that while the total expense has yet to be tallied, they believe the state should raise enough from existing taxes to cover their costs.

They want an Olympic mitigation fund created with the additional tourism and other taxes collected during the Games. Most of that money is expected to come from out-of-state visitors.

The committee also received an update on Olympic education, environmental and youth programs, including a new effort to recruit high-school journalists to help organizers at the 2000 Summer Games in Sydney, Australia.